

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8946

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINR, LE
SUBJECT: NEW LEBANESE CABINET: FUAD GEORGES BOUTROS

REF: BEIRUT 8807

1. ON DECEMBER 9, PRESIDENT SARKIS APPOINTED FUAD BOUTROS AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE.
2. FAMILY BACKGROUND. BOUTROS WAS BORN IN 1918 IN BEIRUT, THE SON OF GEORGES BOUTROS, A BANKER, AND ATINA NEE SHUWAYRI, BOTH DECEASED. IN 1953 HE MARRIED TANIA SHIHADAH, AND HAS
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A SON GEORGES, AND TWO DAUGHTERS, MARA AND RIMA. HE IS A GREEK ORTHODOX. HE SPEAKS EXCELLENT FRENCH AND GOOD ENGLISH IN ADDITION TO HIS NATIVE ARABIC. HE HAD A HEART ATTACK IN ABOUT 1973.

3. EDUCATION. BOUTROS STUDIED AT THE SCHOOL OF THE SACRED

HEARTS BROTHERS, BEIRUT, UNTIL 1935. HE STUDIED LAW AT BOTH ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY, BEIRUT, 1935-38, WHERE HE OBTAINED THE "LICENCE," AND AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LYON IN FRANCE, 1938-40.

4. LEGAL CAREER. WHILE STILL A STUDENT IN BEIRUT, BOUTROS WORKED AS A CLERK IN THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, 1936-38. HE WAS A COURT CLERK, 1939-42. HE WAS A JUDGE AT A LOWER COURT IN MOUNT LEBANON, 1942-43; INVESTIGATIVE JUDGE AT BAABDA, 1943-44; JUDGE IN A COMMERCIAL COURT 1944-47; AND, CURRENTLY, AN INVESTIGATIVE JUDGE ON A MILITARY COURT IN 1946. IN 1947 HE RESIGNED HIS JUDICIAL POSITIONS AND JOINED THE LAW FIRM OF FUAD RIZK. IN 1950 HE OPENED HIS OWN LAW OFFICE IN BEIRUT. FROM 1952 TO 1957 HE WAS A PUBLIC ATTORNEY. AFTER HIS TEMPORARY RETIREMENT FROM POLITICS IN 1970 HE OPENED HIS OWN LAW FIRM AND NOW HAS TWO SUNNI MOSLEMS AS PARTNERS, BAHJE TABARA AND MOHAMMED JAROUDI. THEIR CLIENTS INCLUDE AMERICAN BANKS AND COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES.

5. POLITICAL CAREER. BOUTROS ENTERED POLITICS IN 1959 WHEN HE WAS APPOINTED MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND MINISTER OF PLANNING IN THE KARAMI CABINET, UNTIL 1960. IN 1960 HE WAS ELECTED AS THE GREEK ORTHODOX DEPUTY FROM BEIRUT. HE WAS RE-ELECTED IN 1964, BUT WAS UNEXPECTEDLY DEFEATED IN 1968 AT THE HANDS OF MICHEL SASSINE. HE WAS MINISTER OF JUSTICE 1961-64, IN ANOTHER KARAMI CABINET. HE WAS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF EDUCATION, AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE IN 1966 AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MINISTER OF TOURISM, AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IN 1968, BOTH IN YAFI CABINETS. AS DEPUTY PRIMIN HE HAD ALREADY ATTAINED THE HIGHEST POST OPEN

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TO A GREEK ORTHODOX IN LEBANON. IN 1970 HE RETURNED TO HIS PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE, BUT, SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR, HE HAS ALONG WITH OTHER GREEK ORTHODOX ENDEAVORED TO MEDIATE BETWEEN THE CONFLICTING SIDES.

6. GENERAL POLITICAL OUTLOOK. BOUTROS ENTERED POLITICS IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE CHEHAB PRESIDENCY AND HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A "CHEHABIST" EVER SINCE. THE APPEAL TO BOUTROS OF CHEHAB WAS THE PROMISE THAT THE LATTER WOULD REFORM AND MODERNIZE THE STRUCTURE OF TTE STATE IN AN EVOLUTIONARY WAY. BOUTROS IS A MODERATE AND APPRECIATES THE TRADITIONAL TIES WHICH MAKE SUCH REFORM A GRADUAL PROCESS BUT NONETHELESS FEELS STRONGLY THE EFFORT MUST BE VIGOROUSLY PURSUED. HE ALSO IS ANTI-CONFESSIONALIST BUT AGAINN REALIZES THE CONTRIBUTION CONFESSIONALISM MADE TO THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE AND THAT IT TOO CANNOT BE HANDLED SURGICALLY BECAUSE OF ITS ROOTS IN THE LEBANESE WAY OF LIFE. PROGRESS TOWARDS A NON-CONFESSIONAL STATE, HOWEVER, MUST BE MADE IF, INTER

ALIA, THE GOVERNMENT IS TO BE MODERN AND EFFICIENT. HE IS AS INTERESTED IN DOMESTIC AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IS A SHREWD ANALYST IN BOTH DOMAINS. HE HAS A RARE CHARACTERISTIC FOR A LEBANESE--OBJECTIVITY IN HIS THINKING. IN THE FOREIGN FIELD HE IS FRIENDLY TO AMERICANS AND THE US ALTHOUGH HIS CULTURAL BACKGROUND--EDUCATION, ETC.--IS FRENCH. BECAUSE OF HIS BUSINESS CONTACTS AND TRAVEL HE HAS BECOME MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE US AND AMERICANS. HE IS MODERATE AND PRAGMATIC ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM AND SEES AS MOST LEBANESE DO, THAT THE RESOLUTION OF LEBANON'S OWN PALESTINIAN PROBLEM LIES IN AN OVERALL SOLUTION TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM.

7. RELATIONS WITH SARKIS. BOUTROS IS ONE OF SARKIS' CLOSEST CONFIDANTS. THEIR FRIENDSHIP STEMS FROM THEIR EARLY DAYS WHEN BOTH BECAME CHEHABISTS. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT HIS COUNSEL IS SOUGHT ACROSS THE BOARD BY SARKIS.

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8. PERSONALITY. WITH A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR, BOUTROS IS NONETHELESS RESERVED, SERIOUS, AND THOUGHTFUL. HE IS EXTREMELY HARDWORKING AND ON SOCIAL OCCASIONS PREFERS SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS TO SMALL TALK. HE THINKS AND TALKS RAPIDLY. HE IS ENERGETIC BUT NONETHELESS CAUTIOUS IN THAT HE TRIES TO THINK THINGS THROUGH BEFORE ACTING. HE HAS BEEN FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE WITH THIS MISSION. HE IS WIDELY RESPECTED AS A FIRST-CLASS LAWYER.

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON BOUTROS' THINKING OVER THE YEARS ON KEY ISSUES BEING FORWARDED BY AIRGRAM.
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